

4-H Youth Development Facts in Brief - 2002

4-H, the USDA and Cooperative Extension System's nationwide K-12th grade youth program, the largest U.S. youth development program, is celebrating its **Centennial in 2002**.

4-H began as a way of involving the heads, hearts, and hands of farm youth in practical, hands-on education in agriculture and home economics related subjects relevant to their everyday lives. Early Extension agents and progressive educators introduced new technology and improved ways of doing things to rural communities through work with youth.

By 1960, more than half of 4-H participants were non-farm youth. Today, 45% are from rural areas and towns of up to 10,000; 55% are from larger cities; their suburbs, and from large inner cities. 30% of 4-H'ers are from racial and ethnic minorities.

Residence	% 4-H Youth	% US Youth in 4-H
Farm - <10k	45	43.5
10k - 50k	23	14.8
Suburbs >50k	9	4.6
Cities >50k	24	24.9

4-H educational content has expanded with the times, and the changing demographics. Today 4-H participants may choose more than one subject area "project" in a given year. Major categories of educational content in 2001, and 4-H participant enrollment in each, are:

511,165	Citizenship and Civic Education
604,286	Communications and Expressive Arts
341,579	Consumer and Family Sciences
986,186	Environmental Education and Earth Sciences
1,371,172	Personal Development and Leadership
2,094,838	Plants and Animals
855,253	Science and Technology

The 4-H program combines the cooperative efforts of nearly 7 million youth, 640,000 volunteer leaders, about 3,600 FTE's of professional staff, 105 state land-grant universities, state and local governments, the private sector partners, state and local 4-H foundations, the National 4-H Council, and the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The mission of 4-H, from its 2001 Strategic Plan, is to empower youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults.

There are many ways youth can participate in 4-H programs. In 2001, **6,752,148** youth, principally Kindergarten-12th Grade, participated in 4-H in the following ways:

1,634,039	were members of 99,188 clubs;
2,401,705	were members of 116,530 special interest groups;
3,835,772	were in 198,382 4-H school enrichment units;
59,910	were in 4-H individual study programs;
23,095	enrolled in 4-H instructional TV programs;
87,683	were in 6,627 school-aged child care programs;
398,268	attended 4-H conducted camps.

Because the large 4-H school enrichment component is concentrated in 4th - 6th grade, **4-H involves at least 28% of US youth** during one or more of their K - 12th grade years.

4-H programs are conducted in 3,051 counties of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Micronesia, and Northern Mariana Islands.

4-H alumni now total about 60 million. 4-H-type programs are truly international, with more than 60 countries having similar programs with 4 million youth.

4-H has a 100-year tradition of voluntary action for public-private partnerships at federal, state, county, and community levels. These partnerships broadly reflect both fiscal and human resources. Principal funding comes from county, state, and federal public sources, but private sector partners invest almost \$100 million annually in 4-H, through their local and state 4-H foundations and the National 4-H Council.

The value of the time, mileage, and out-of-pocket expenses that the 640,000 volunteer leaders contribute annually to 4-H exceeds \$2 billion, five times the combined county, state, federal and private sector support.

Positive Youth Development

Youth development is the natural process of developing one's capacities. While it occurs through youth's daily experiences with people, places and possibilities, it is far too important to be left to chance.

Positive youth development occurs from an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, choices, relationships, and the support necessary for youth to fully participate. Youth development takes place in families, peer groups, schools, neighborhoods and communities.

4-H youth development programs provide just such opportunities, relationships, and support for youth to help them acquire the life skills necessary to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood. 4-H Youth Development uses experiential, research-based educational opportunities that help youth become competent, caring, confident, connected, and contributing citizens of character. These experiences immediately yield new knowledge, which leads to changed behavior, and through prolonged participation, gradually promotes attitudes, characterizations and outcomes of:

Competence - advanced skills in some important subjects of interest

Character - clear consistent moral precepts that effectively guide behavior

Caring - willingness to respond to the needs and concerns of others

Confidence - willingness to take on new challenges, and expect success

Connections - establishing and maintaining relationships at many levels

Contributions - making a difference in the lives of others through service

4-H has traditionally expressed the same sort of outcomes in its definition of the 4-H Clover:

The widely recognized 4-H Clover emblem with **H**'s on each leaf stands for:

Head – clearer thinking and decision making, knowledge useful throughout life;

Heart – greater loyalty, strong personal values, positive self concept, concern for others;

Hands – larger service, workforce preparedness, useful skills, science and technology literacy;

Health – better living, healthy lifestyles.

Relationship of Positive Youth Development to Prevention:

The broader, more holistic view of helping youth to realize their full potential has not replaced the focus on preventing problems, but rather created a larger framework that promotes positive outcomes for all young people. Both positive youth development and prevention are valuable and necessary, and in practice, the distinction between the two is often blurred. Prevention is defined as an active process of creating conditions and fostering personal attributes that promote the well-being of people. Prevention efforts reduce risk and enhance protective factors or “assets,” the supports, opportunities and relationships that help give people resilience as they deal with negative circumstances. At one time or another, all youth will need focused support to overcome the obstacles placed in their way by our current culture.

Features of Positive Development Settings:

The 2001 National 4-H Impact Assessment demonstrated that eight critical needs of youth are consistently met in 4-H

youth development programs. The importance of these critical elements has been verified most recently by the survey of existing research included in the 2002 *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*

- Positive relationships with caring adults, good emotional and moral support;
- Feeling emotionally and physically safe;
- Structure and limits that are developmentally appropriate and that recognize adolescents' increasing social maturity and expertise;
- Feeling a sense of belonging, in an inclusive environment;
- Exposure to positive morals, values, and positive social norms;
- Opportunities for skill building and mastery, including learning how to form close, durable human relations with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviors, as well as to acquire the life skills necessary for school success and successful transition into adulthood;
- Opportunities to value and practice service to others, to do things that make a real difference and to play an active role in the organizations themselves; and
- Opportunities for self-determination, and engagement in learning.
- Opportunities to see oneself as an active participant in the future

When these conditions are in place in a good 4-H youth development program, participating youth are highly likely to demonstrate the six C's cited above.

For more information on 4-H Youth Development, contact the land-grant university in your state, your county Cooperative Extension office, or the following:

Families, 4-H and Nutrition

CSREES, USDA,

Mail Stop 2225,

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20250-2225

Telephone (202) 720-2908

www.national4-hheadquarters.gov

National 4-H Council

7100 Connecticut Avenue,

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Telephone (301) 961-2820

www.fourhcouncil.edu

Other 4-H Websites:

4-H Centennial: www.4hcentennial.org

National Portal: www.4h-usa.org (Lists all websites)

4-H Technology: www.4-h.org

CSREES/USDA: www.reeusda.gov

Children, Youth and Families Education & Research

www.reeusda.gov/4h/cyfar/cyfar.htm

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